

QUALITY

teaching



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President

The *R*edesign of Accreditation to Inform the Simultaneous Transformation of Educator Preparation and P-12 Schools

Accountability and improvement are the dual missions of accreditation, and the sine qua non of preparation programs for the professions in America.

Accountability and improvement within educator preparation have increasingly focused on candidate performance and its impact on P-12 student learning, in recent years through performance-based accreditation. Despite this focus, national and state data show weaknesses in all areas of the teacher quality system, including preparation, entry, and professional development.

NCATE is engaging in a bold redesign of its processes to address these challenges. Educator preparation programs must be transformed alongside the simultaneous transformation of P-12 schools, both with a clear focus on enhancing all facets of P-12 student learning.

Strategies that NCATE will employ to achieve this goal include (1) using the concept of continuous improvement of preparation programs toward higher levels of performance, (2) increased efficiency and cost-effectiveness in the process, and (3) reaccreditation processes that engage programs in transformation initiatives which are sharply focused on factors related to increasing P-12 student learning.

NCATE wants to stimulate unaccredited programs to test themselves against national professional standards. Further, NCATE desires to bring high quality non-university alternate approaches and new models of preparation into the accreditation system. Finally, accreditation should be a repository of current shared understanding of how to foster P-12 student learning.

I'd like to share with you the values upon which NCATE's redesign has been built.

Excellence

Commitment to Excellence

The NCATE accreditation process is designed to help educator preparation programs attain excellence. The process focuses on continuous improvement strategies to assist institutions in preparing educators who can help increase all dimensions of P–12 student learning. The process is designed to encourage preparation programs to strengthen the evidentiary base of the profession and align educator preparation with P–12 urgent needs.

First, the redesigned accreditation process will expect all institutions to address how they are moving to a “target” level of performance within the standards—and beyond the “acceptable” level. The process is designed around the concept of continuous improvement, in which organizations consistently strive to recalibrate their efforts toward an increased level of performance.

Accreditation should be a repository of current shared understanding of how to foster P–12 student learning.

Next, educator preparation thus far has a rather thin evidentiary base. I want to see accreditation become a mechanism through which institutions are encouraged to utilize research and development approaches to build knowledge of effective practice, and share that knowledge so that efforts can be scaled up. This focus helps build capacity across a range of institutions, so that many can participate in leadership efforts in a research and development arena.

Educator preparation exists to serve our nation in providing excellent P–12 educators. It must partner with its ‘clients’ in order to achieve maximum results. Accreditation can encourage strong partnerships with states and districts/schools as a means to assist both in transformation of P–12 education and preparation programs. Furthermore, accreditation can act as a lever for restructuring educator preparation by encouraging programs to significantly strengthen the pre-service clinical preparation component to increase teacher effectiveness.

Transformation

NCATE’s Transformation Initiative

NCATE’s redesigned process offers continuing institutions the option to exercise leadership with a ‘Transformation Initiative’ that is designed to stimulate

projects which contribute to the knowledge base of effective practice and/or focus on the simultaneous transformation of educator preparation and P–12 schools.

Initiatives must relate to one or more of the NCATE standards and address major issues and challenges in educator preparation and quality. Examples of potential initiatives include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Robust clinical preparation, including educator preparation in school settings.
- Stronger preparation in assessment to improve student learning.
- Evidence of the value-added of accreditation in improving student learning.
- Study of best practices in an area of a discipline.
- Overcoming barriers in educator preparation to helping all P–12 students learn.
- Recruitment of a diverse, highly qualified group of candidates.
- Follow-up performance data and its effective use in improving educator preparation.
- Validity studies of performance assessments or other research on assessment and evidence of candidate ability to facilitate P–12 student learning.
- Partnerships with P–12 schools and school districts to address the transformation of student learning and the conditions that support learning, such as school organization, learning environments, community and family engagement, and other district/school/ and student-specific issues of major magnitude.
- Partnerships with P–12 schools to address the P–16 challenge of improving student readiness for post-secondary education.
- Partnership with P–12 schools to improve the retention of educators in schools.

Institutions, or groups of institutions, that select and implement a Transformation Initiative will add to the evidentiary base of our profession.

In addition, preparation programs will be aligned with the needs of P–12 schools, districts, and states in such a way as never before. The Transformation Initiative helps close the gap between theory and practice, knowledge and application, coursework and classroom.

Commitment to Collegiality

The redesigned NCATE accreditation process helps educator preparation programs focus on continuous improvement and offers formative features which enhance a professional collegial review.

A focus on collegiality helps to refocus the role of the visit and visitors from 'checking on compliance only' and facilitating continuous improvement. Further, the concept of collegiality as a key value of the redesign will help to eliminate a culture of fear surrounding accreditation in which institutions strive to hide what they perceive as weaknesses.

The redesign creates multiple points of contact over the seven year cycle, and helps avoid accreditation as a one-time periodic event. This should make accreditation more meaningful to institutions and also improve the review process.

Institutions undergoing accreditation for the first time and those continuing accreditation (which select one of the continuous improvement options) can request review and feedback on their school of education self-study a year prior to the visit, providing increased opportunity for success at the time of the on-site visit. Moreover, a mid-cycle review for initial and continuing program review creates a formative process, and provides time for institutions to make changes prior to the on-visit.

Further, both initial and continuing accreditation offer institutions choices in how they demonstrate that they meet professional standards and are enhancing P-12 student learning. Programs preparing for first-time accreditation can choose either (1) to respond to each element of the standards or (2) to respond to the standards in a holistic manner.

Continuing institutions also have choices in how they demonstrate continuous improvement. At the unit review (school of education) level, they may either show a move toward the target level of performance in meeting the standards, or they may engage in a Transformation Initiative.

NCATE will engage in retraining of reviewers and recruitment of new reviewers to undertake evaluation in the redesigned system.

Commitment to Cost-Effectiveness

Redesigned initial and continuing accreditation are transparent systems with significantly reduced reporting.

Reduced paperwork and documentation will strengthen opportunities for institutions to focus on data and the use of data for improvement in candidate and unit/program performance, as well as other continuous improvement strategies.

Inclusivity

Educator preparation institutions have not always met all of the needs of their surrounding districts. Alternative non-university providers have proliferated since the 1990s as a result of the increasing need for teachers, lack of consistent supply, and needs for specific types of teachers. Many of these alternative providers have focused on unmet needs of districts—for example, more qualified math and science teachers, which some university programs have thus far been unable to supply.

NCATE wants to work collaboratively with states to improve policy that supports high quality educator preparation. To that end, NCATE calls all educator preparation providers—university and non-university, to attain high standards and be measured against them. NCATE currently has two non-university providers in the pipeline, and encourages other high quality providers with nontraditional approaches to seek national accreditation.

There is unacceptable variation in quality among both university-based programs and programs offered by alternative providers. It is time for all programs to be measured against high standards. Consequently, NCATE has opened discussions with organizations representing groups of alternative providers on NCATE accreditation standards and processes.

NCATE and its State Partners can work together to ensure that all providers produce results which help P-12 student achievement improve. With

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the advent of state databases which can track teachers, the educator preparation programs from which they graduate, and P–12 student performance, the states and NCATE have new tools to use as they evaluate programmatic effectiveness.

A Special Note to Policymakers

Through the redesign, NCATE is positioned to be a strong participant in the simultaneous transformation of educator preparation and P–12 schools, with the goal of increasing P–12 student learning.

NCATE has operated a State Partnership Program since 1989. The program has made great strides in integrating professional and state standards to enhance rigor in educator preparation and increase consistency in preparation standards from state to state. It is now time to move to the next level with state partnerships, by encouraging educator preparation institutions to engage in meaningful local and state partnerships which address urgent P–12 needs.

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Through its transformation initiative and focus on continuous improvement, NCATE accreditation is poised to become a lever to align educator preparation with urgent P–12 local/state/national needs.

I am honored to participate in reshaping accreditation to better meet the needs of the states and our nation, and I look forward to our joint efforts in the months and years to come.

A coalition of over 30 organizations of teachers, teacher educators, policymakers and school specialists committed to quality teaching

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